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ARTS & CULTURE, NEWS

BY JOHN
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Backyard Wrestling Has Come to Brooklyn

(Photos: Endrit Slaughter via The Sloodge's Facebook)

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If you were recently enjoying a peaceful night in your quiet apartment in Park Slope when, all of a sudden, a crowd of nearby 20-and-30-somethings start chanting “U.S.A” and beating each other up and ruining your evening, well, Matt Proctor might be the person to blame. Proctor, an artist and member of the performance collective/show house the Sloodge, recently staged a DIY wrestling show—the first of the new Brooklyn Backyard Wrestling promotion—in his backyard in Brooklyn where, of course, things got weird.

Proctor said the idea for the show came from his long-time love of wrestling—he even had another backyard wrestling league, the CCW, back in high school—and the need to put on a show at It house.

The first thing you’ll notice in the video of the match (which is embedded below) is that the combatants in the ring don’t look like most pro-wrestlers. Instead, they’re firmly in the “featherweight” division, if there is such a thing. But then again, they’re not doing it to show off their physiques—as a writer/actor/performer/musician/probably something else he didn’t mention when we spoke, Proctor said wrestling happens to unite a lot of his varied creative interests.

“Wrestling was sort of the easiest way to tie all those things together—wrestling is a very basic form of theater and boils things down to its most basic concepts,” Proctor said.

When watching wrestling, in other words, people usually know when to cheer and when to boo. The match in the video is between Proctor—playing a “heel” (wrestling lingo for bad guy) character named Frank Lee Fabulous—and a luchador character named U.S. Essa, who is helped throughout the match by G. I. Bro.

Frank Lee Fabulous vs. U.S. Essa: BBW Bash at the Sloodg...



“As Frank Lee Fabulous—the kind of Trump, exaggerated American executive character—it’s so easy to know what you want to do,” Proctor said. “You want people to hate you.”

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It's no coincidence that he's playing a Trump-esque character, Proctor added, because "Trump basically is a wrestler, running his mouth. He's kind of always cutting a promo." Cutting a promo, for the uninitiated, is more wrestling jargon, which refers to when a wrestler gives a pre-match interview in which they call out their rival, usually by taunting them and making fun of them to amp up the bitterness and drama of the competition. They might even imply that their foe is "crooked" or that they belong in jail.

In addition to hosting the live show, Proctor is also working the wrestling routine into a public access reality show he makes, called *Scenes from a Life*—which he described as a kind of de-heightened version of overwrought programming like *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. It's appropriate, he adds, given that reality TV is the only "real" thing less real than wrestling.

While he enjoyed putting on the show, Proctor said this is probably not the beginning of his later-in-life wrestling career. "There's kind of a Peter Pan aspect, trying to see if you are still young enough to do it, I guess. But I'm 31, and breaking my arm doing this would not be great."

Plus, he added, while the neighbors didn't complain about the week they spent getting ready for the match, throwing each other across their backyard, they seemed less than thrilled when a rowdy, chanting audience packed the tiny patio for the show.

For now, they only have a few more shows planned, including a show at the Queens Arts Festival, which is being held this year from October 21 to October 23, and a Halloween show at another friend's show house, The Last Resort.

"We're doing a cage match in a moon castle [at the Last Resort]—one of those inflatable things," Proctor said. "We will see how it goes."

Update 8:45 p.m.: An earlier version of this story misidentified the creator of Brooklyn Backyard Wrestling as Matt Porter.

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